The Sites of Long-houses.

85. All Iban long-houses are situated on the banks of rivers, or streams navigable by dug-out canoes. The Baleh and its tributaries drain broken and hilly country, and their involuted courses contain many rapids. These difficulties of terrain mean that suitable sites for long-houses are often hard to find. What is needed is a terrace, some 20 yards wide, sufficiently elevated to escape the threat of floods (some of the rivers rise 30 to 40 feet above their normal levels following exceptionally heavy rains), and sufficiently level to enable the house to extend lengthwise. In the central portion of most long-houses the floor level is some 10 or 12 feet above the ground. At the ends it may be as much as 30 feet, but should the terrace fall away more sharply than this the architectural difficulties are so severe as to prevent the building on of further apartments. This problem is sometimes solved by 'stepping' the house, so that its floor is on several different levels (as, for example, the house of Penghulu Kuleh, in Sungai Amang), but this arrangement is not favoured, and is resorted to but rarely. Another limitation on the length of a house is the ritual prohibition (*pemali*) against a long-house spanning a tributary stream of the river on to which it abuts. The spanning of such a tributary, even though it be no more than a trickle, is believed to bring misfortune to all the people of the house, and is always avoided. The ritual danger is that the river spirits, offended by the filth and refuse cast beneath the long-house, might seek retribution.

86. The number of apartments which a long-house can contain, is limited then, by these two factors. In some areas suitable sites are so rare that houses have to be built on steep spurs, several hundred feet above the river from which the unfortunate women have to fetch, in gourds, all the water required for domestic purposes. Even Rumah Nyala, in the not intractable lower reaches of the Sut, is now hemmed in by a small stream at one end, and by a sudden falling away of the ground at the other. The usual solution when a community finds itself in this position is for additional *bileks* to be built directly on to the front of the long-house. This results in two parallel rows of apartments each abutting on to a common open platform, or *tanju*. In the case of Rumah Nyala, for example, there were 20 family apartments in the main part of the long-house, giving it a total length of 301 feet. Two other families had built on to the *tanju*, and three others, who were sharing apartments in the main house, planned to do so in 1951. Rumah Tungku, to take another example, is most favourably situated in the wide basin of the Tiau, one of the tributaries of the Sungai Mujong. Here the moderately flat land has enabled 39 apartments to be built in one line, giving the house a length of a little over 300 yards. The house, has however, been constructed in a very slight curve, so that it is not possible to see from one end of the *ruai* right through to the other, lying just over a sixth of a mile away. In addition to these 39 apartments in one line, there were five more built on to the *tanju*, and one protruding from the back of the house. The five remaining families of the total community of 50 *bileks*, were either recent arrivals from other areas, or the junior sections resulting from *bilek* partition; and although all of them had constructed farming huts (*dampa*) of their own, none had, in 1950, built on to the main long-house.

The Dispersion of Long-House Communities.

87. The Baleh is still a sparsely populated region. The Iban are pre-eminently a riverine people, and their occupation of a new territory is always by way of the rivers. Infiltrating into the diverging branches of the Baleh, they have, in the last thirty years, dispersed over a wide area. This process is still continuing; the area enclosed by the points to which they have so far radiated is probably about 1,300 square miles. Far from all of this area is actually in use, and much of it is still virgin jungle, but it does represent the territory over which Iban rights of occupation have been established. For this region, as a whole, the density of population is only about nine per square mile, and nowhere does it rise above 18—20 per square mile. The long-houses in which all the people of the Baleh live are scattered along the banks of the 300 miles of river which they have so far occupied. This means that throughout the region one encounters a long-house about once in every two to three miles. Sometimes long-houses may be found that are within hailing distance of one another, though this is a distinctly rare event. Nowhere are there clusters of houses, such as occur among the Land Dayaks of the First Division, or the Iban of the Rejang Delta.[16] The universal rule is that each long-house constitutes a single community; in other words, among the Iban, the village and the long-house coincide. Moreover, traditionally, each long-house community is an autonomous entity, not subject to the control of any other group

88. To-day, of course, every long-house is subject to Government control. Thus within the Baleh there are six districts, each in charge of a Penghulu, appointed by, and responsible to Government. The six districts were, in 1948:

Name of Penghulu	*District*	*Number of Long-Houses in District*
Penghulu Temengong Koh ..	Ulu Baleh	9
Penghulu Jugah	Ulu Baleh and S. Merirai ..	15
Penghulu Grinang	Ulu Baleh and S. Gat ..	29
Penghulu Sibat	S. Mujong and S. Melinau ..	22
Penghulu Rabong	S. Mujong	26
Penghulu Jengeut	N. Baleh and S. Sut ..	32

(16) At Bawang Assan, for example, some 18 miles down river from Sibu, there are six long-houses all within earshot of one another. All the people of this area cultivate swamp *padi*.

361 In addition to those factors mentioned above, the permanence of settlements is influenced by other circumstances as well, such as availability of a personally determined adequate water supply, proximity to farm lands, distance from roads and means of communication with other communities and urban areas, and the quality of materials and craftsmanship used in the construction of the longhouse.

Freeman's generalization that,

> "all Iban long-houses are situated on the banks of rivers, or streams, navigable by dug-out canoes,"

361 does not apply to a number of settlements in the Sibu District. In some
• 312 cases, Ibans have been crowded into areas which, by their own evaluation, are less desirable owing to poor water supplies. For example, at Bukit Penyau, where the Iban longhouses are surrounded by Chinese settlements, the only water supply available for a community of fifteen doors is a small ground-well containing greenish, stagnant water. As opportunities have presented themselves, the Ibans of that community have moved to other sites offering better water.

361 Increasingly, the proximity of farm lands to the longhouse is in-
241 fluencing the settlement patterns of the Ibans. Unlike the peers who practice shifting cultivation, maintaining a permanent longhouse but locating annually in farmhouses (langkau, rumah alau) at some distance from the longhouse, the Ibans of this District infrequently find it necessary to farm so far away from the longhouses that they must spend
000 nights away (bemalam) at the farm. The introduction of the Padi Planting